

VZCZCXRO9290
PP RUEH DU RUEHJO
DE RUEHTN #0105 1280601
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 080601Z MAY 09
FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3071
INFO RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 6384
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0099
RUEHJO/AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG 2128
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 3270

UNCLAS CAPE TOWN 000105

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WESTERN CAPE PARLIAMENT ELECTS ZILLE AS PREMIER

11. (U) On May 6, at the same time that the first session of the National Parliament was taking place, so was the inaugural session of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament. During the session Helen Zille was elected and sworn in as Premier of the Western Cape.

12. (U) Cape High Court judge Dennis Davis, standing in for Acting Judge President Jeanette Traverso presided over proceedings. As in the National Assembly, members of the 42 seat provincial parliament were sworn in prior to the election of the Premier. Zille and DA provincial leader, Theuns Botha were in the first group to be sworn in while COPE member, Allan Boesak was the last to take the oath. The atmosphere was one of general excitement, as DA members exclaimed that this is what they have worked for. The DA unseated the ANC from the province in last month's general election, relegating the ANC to the opposition benches for the first time in years. ANC members were, however, upbeat as the swearing-in continued, making wisecracks and friendly interjections.

13. (U) The DA went into proceedings with a 22 seat majority over the 14 ANC, 3 COPE, 2 ID and 1 ACDP seat and was expected to dominate proceedings. The election for the Speaker of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament was the first order after members were sworn in, with the DA's candidate being Shahid Esau, while the ANC nominated Phillip Jacobs as their candidate. Esau was elected as Speaker for the Provincial Parliament while Richard Majola of the DA was elected Deputy Speaker. Nominations for the Premier were then called upon, unsurprisingly the DA nominated Zille, while the ANC proposed Lynne Brown as an alternate candidate. Members then cast their vote by secret ballot, proceedings were adjourned and votes were counted. Zille secured 24 voted and Brown 14, in a reversal of events that took place in the National assembly COPE refused to support the DA candidate and spoiled its ballots.

14. (U) Opposition parties congratulated Zille and Cosatu Western Cape issued a statement congratulating her on her appointment and promised to co-operate with the provincial government to fast-track service delivery. The trade union, however, added that "Cosatu wants to let the premier know that we will be watching her closely and will hold her to account". In her congratulatory speech ANC provincial leader, Lynne Brown, said her party would be a loyal, but "very strong" opposition. In her acceptance speech Zille highlighted the core values that would be vital under her governance, namely honesty, and defining, accepting and meeting the responsibility of office. She added that the DA "will govern for all the people of the Western Cape, in all our rich diversity. We will be a government for all the people." After the swearing-in ceremony, Zille briefed the media about her plans for the Western Cape. Zille reiterated the importance of responsible citizenship and transparency of government. She stated that her priority as Premier was to ensure that the systems and structures of government were appropriate and working. She stressed that it was important to have the right people in the right places and that sound leadership and guidance be given at all times. Zille is expected to announce her cabinet by May 8.